

Bloomington short on Section 8 housing

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Of the 69,000 residents living within the city of Bloomington, there are 1,300 low-income families seeking Section 8 housing. Because of a lack of housing that will accept Section 8 vouchers, 400 of these families are on a waitlist.

Section 8 housing is part of the Housing Choice Voucher program and is funded by the federal government to help low-income families pay rental expenses.

The issue with Section 8 housing in Bloomington is the unwillingness of various landlords and property owners to participate in the plan, said Hans Huffman chairman of the Community and Family Resources Commission.

The hesitancy of local landlords might stem from the fear that low-income tenants might damage the properties they rent, Bonnie Vesely, Monroe County Circles Initiative coordinator and community organizer for South Central Community Action Program, said.

But because the consequences of damaging a rental while in Section 8 housing can mean homelessness or eviction, she said Section 8 tenants have a powerful incentive to repair any damages within a designated time frame.

For this reason, The City of Bloomington CFR, the Bloomington Housing Authority, the South Central Community Action Program and the Monroe County Circles Initiative are partnering to provide an informational session titled “There’s No Place Like Home: **Affordable** Housing — Information and Opportunities for Rental Property Owners/Managers” on Oct. 5 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

This information session will provide land and property owners with vital information about Section 8 housing, as well as first-hand accounts from Section 8 tenants and leasers.

Vesely said the meeting is a step toward improving the availability of Section 8 housing, adding that the availability right now is dire.

Huffman said the sponsoring committees want to present information on Section 8

benefits in the hopes that some landlords in Bloomington might be swayed to consider it.

“We have a situation in Bloomington where, as a student, you can get together with a few other people and rent a house for a thousand dollars, but if you have a family with one income, it’s more difficult,” Vesely said. “The landlords tend to play to the student population. Why charge \$500 when you can get \$1,000?”